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Melbourne Church.

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Pl. I.



N. E. VIEW OF MELBOURNE CHURCH, RESTORED.

Melbourne Church.

BY THE

REV. JOSEPH DEANS, M.A.

VICAR OF MELBOURNE, PERPETUAL CURATE OF CHELLASTON, DERBYSHIRE,
AND DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL OF BEVERLEY.

WITH PLATES BY GRAY.

London :

W. J. CLEAVER, BAKER STREET,
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PREFACE.

THE present work was undertaken with a view of drawing public attention to a building which does not appear to be extensively known, though it presents a specimen of ancient architecture better preserved, and more complete, than most others in the kingdom. The Author feels that the subject would have been more successfully handled by those whose acquaintance with ancient architecture is not so limited as his own ; but it has been his endeavour to give as clear an account as possible of what he conceives to be its history and peculiar features. For the plans and views by which the work is illustrated, he is indebted to the kindness of Joseph Mitchell, Esq. Architect, Sheffield, and which assistance he acknowledges with gratitude.

MELBOURNE CHURCH.

So deeply has the ALMIGHTY stamped the image of His eternal power and godhead on His works, that man's mind cannot rest in contemplation upon them, without being powerfully drawn to acknowledge the existence of a Supreme Being, as the Maker and Preserver of all things. This truth may be read in the history of almost every society of men, however rude and barbarous : none have been found, amongst whom there have not been discovered traces of a belief in some superior being. One result of this belief is to be seen in the provision which they made for religious worship ; and which appears to have been

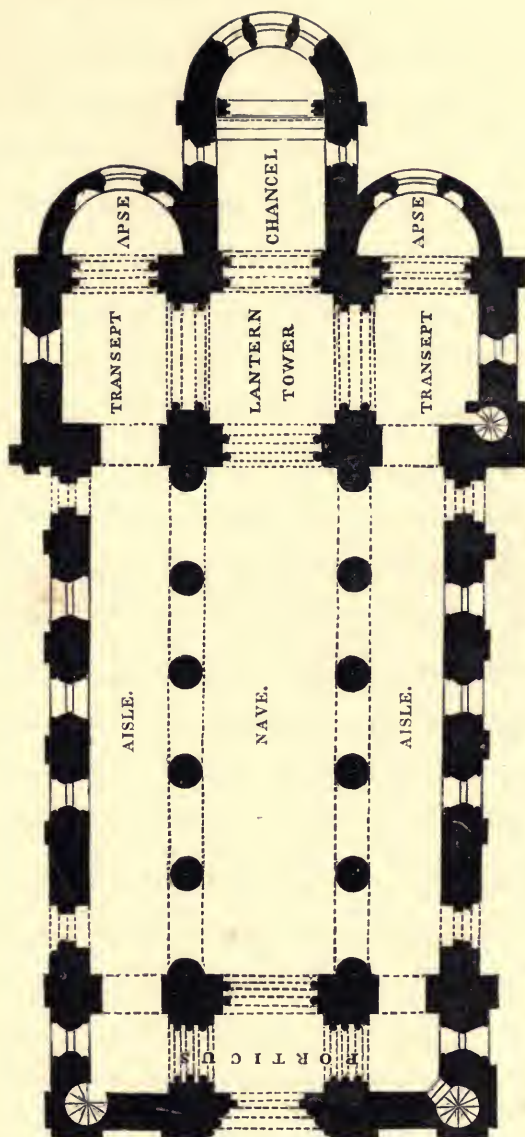
regarded, in all ages and under every variety of circumstance, as an object of the greatest importance. In the infancy of society among the ancient heathen nations, some grove or hill was consecrated and set apart for religious use ; and there they erected their altars, and performed their sacred rites. But these, which might be called natural temples, soon gave place to buildings made with hands,—at first rude, and frequently works of immense labour, such as the druidical temples of our own country ; and afterwards buildings of a different kind, more or less perfect in design and execution, according to the degree of civilization to which the people had attained. Civilization, however, was the effect, and not the cause ; it resulted from the existence of Religion, and was necessarily accompanied by an increased desire to please and do honour to a Supe-

rior Being : a feeling which both urged men forward, and encouraged them in their exertions, until those buildings, which were raised for the purposes of religion, were amongst the most correct and beautiful of human works.

Such being the effect produced by religious feelings on the mind of man in a state of natural darkness, we cannot suppose that under the pure light of the Gospel, his feelings for the honour of God would be subdued : on the contrary, such feelings were more likely to be strengthened, and to result in increased exertions. But the Christian Temple was necessarily different from one raised to the honour of heathen deities. It was to be a place of *worship* and *instruction* ; and for these ends, heathen temples were altogether unsuited, being planned for the offering of sacrifice, and joining in other rites which were most

conveniently performed in the open air. The introduction of Christianity, therefore, required a change in the arrangement of religious buildings : and the design which was considered best fitted for the end in view, seems to have been adopted from that of the public courts of justice, called *Basilicæ*.

The Basilica was a rectangular building, usually divided, lengthways, into three parts by two rows of columns : at one end there was an entrance through an open portico ; and in the middle of the end opposite, a circular recess or *apsis*, in which was placed the seat of the judge. Each of these features was adopted by the early Christian architects, the different parts of the building being appropriated to different purposes, and distinguished by different names. The *Porticus* or *porch* was open to all : beyond that, none except those who had



MELBOURNE CHURCH RESTORED.
GROUND PLAN.



been admitted members of the Church were allowed to proceed ; and close to this part, but within the Church itself, was placed the *font*, for the baptism of such as desired to become members.

The Porticus was also appropriated as a burial-place for persons of distinction connected with the Church. Interment was expressly forbidden* in any other part of the interior of the building, and scrupulously avoided, until circumstances led to an infringement of the canon. Bede, speaking of the death of Augustine the first Archbishop of Canterbury, says : “ His body was deposited *without*, close by the church of the apostles Peter and Paul, by reason that the same was not yet finished nor consecrated ; but as soon as it was

* “ In ecclesiâ nullatenus sepeliantur, sed in atrio aut porticu aut in exedris ecclesiæ.”—*Canon of the Council of Nantes, anno 658.*

dedicated, the body was brought in, and decently buried in the *north porch* thereof, wherein also were interred the bodies of all the succeeding Archbishops, except two only, Theodorus and Berthwald, whose bodies are *within* that church, because the aforesaid porch could contain no more."

Closely connected with the Porticus was that part of the church which was called the *Galilee*, as being at the greatest distance from the most holy place : what its precise situation was, is not clearly ascertained. It was open to the Church, so that persons assembled in it, though not permitted to approach nearer, could yet see and hear the services which were performed. For this reason, it seems to have been assigned to the lowest order of penitents ; and perhaps, also, to the newly admitted members of the Church, who had frequently to undergo a long probation, before they were

allowed to take their places amongst other worshippers in the body of the church.

The rectangular part of the building, adjoining the Porticus, was called the *Naos*, and here the Christian community had their respective places,—one part of it being assigned to the faithful, and another to the more advanced catechumens, as well as to a class of penitents who had been readmitted into the Church, but were not permitted to partake of all its ordinances. These latter were confined to that part of the Naos which was next to the Porticus, and was called the *Narthex*: it seems to answer to what we should call the anti-temple.

Beyond the Naos, and at the end opposite the Porticus, was situated the semi-circular recess or apsis already spoken of. This was called the *Bema* or sanctuary, as being the most holy part of the building,

10 FIRST CHURCHES OF ROUGH WOOD.

where the most sacred rites of the Christian faith were performed. Into this part none had access but the priests : it was frequently raised two or three steps above the floor of the Naos, and separated from it by a lattice or screen, from the Latin name of which, *Cancelli*, is derived the word *chancel*, by which the corresponding part of modern churches is distinguished.

These were the principal features in the most finished specimens of early Christian churches. It is not, however, to be supposed that they were essential to every building raised for the purpose of Christian worship : many, we might perhaps say all, of those first erected in this country were composed of rough wood, covered with a thatch of reeds. This circumstance will readily account for the complaint which was so generally made but a short time afterwards, that the houses of God were

falling to pieces through decay ; since it could scarcely have been the case, if those buildings had been formed of more durable materials.

There is, or was, but a few years since, existing at Greensted, near Ongar in Essex, a church of this description ; which, although of later date than the time now spoken of, and not strictly an ecclesiastical building, yet, taking into consideration the purpose for which it was erected, affords a fair specimen of the manner in which our Saxon ancestors were accustomed to build. It is clear that there were but few stone churches before the middle of the seventh century, when Benedict Biscop sought foreign workmen to build the church at Wearmouth—*Romano more—in the Roman manner*. It has been supposed, in consequence of this expression being used, that previous to this, there were no

workmen in Britain able to build with stone, and consequently no stone buildings of any kind. This, however, appears to be an error; for we read of a stone church, which had been erected by Nynias, long before this time, among the southern Picts. “ This place belongs to the province of the Bernicians, and is generally called Candida Casa, the White House; because he there built a church of stone, which was not usual among the Britons.” The expression, *in the Roman manner*, might therefore be intended to distinguish regular buildings from those which were formed of rough unwrought stone; *lapidei tabulatus* is the expression generally used for this kind of stone buildings, which might be intended to designate buildings with courses of stone in a regular manner. Still, however, stone buildings were uncommon among the Saxons; to express

the act of building they used the word *timbrian*, which conveys the idea that timber was the material most commonly employed by them.

The church at Greensted was probably erected to receive the body of St. Edmund, which appears to have rested there while being conveyed to its place of interment. But although not originally intended for a place of Christian worship, it seems to have been soon afterwards used as a church, and has continued to be so used from that time to the present. It is a small rectangular building formed of the trunks of oaks split in two, and placed upright, side by side, the edges being roughly worked to make them fit together : at the bottom they are fitted into a groove, and their tops are fastened into a beam, which originally supported a roof of thatch.

This simple building is just the kind

which we might expect to find among a rude and uncultivated people, ignorant of all but the most simple means of providing for their necessities. We may, therefore, readily suppose, that when the glad tidings of salvation began to be proclaimed in this our land, the first churches erected by our Saxon ancestors were similar to this ; and that for a considerable period they continued, in most cases, to be satisfied with this rude and simple style. Some, however, were occasionally built of stone ; at first few in number and heavy in appearance, but afterwards more numerous and better executed, so that when we arrive at the time of the conquest, we find them very general, and frequently of great beauty.

The date of Melbourne Church has been the subject of much discussion ; some writers having asserted it to be as early as

the seventh century, while others have supposed it not to have been erected before the conquest. There is a tradition, that soon after Ethelred came to the throne of Mercia, his queen was murdered; and that he himself was in some way implicated in the crime; and in order to quiet his conscience, began to build churches as an atonement, — this church at Melbourne being the first which he erected. But that part of the tradition which states that the murder of the queen was soon after Ethelred came to the throne is clearly an error. When he began his reign he was not more than twenty years of age; and it is not till some years afterwards that any mention is made of his being married. We find, however, that after he had reigned twenty-two years, his queen Osthrid, sister of Egfrid, king of Northumberland, was murdered by her own people, the Mercian

nobles : and in seven years from that time, Ethelred vacated the throne, and retired into the monastery of Bardney, where he continued to reside till his death. This does not necessarily fasten upon him the guilt of any participation in the murder ; his conduct may be explained by the circumstances in which he was placed : for the sudden death of his queen by the hands of powerful persons who surrounded him, would naturally engender in his mind a feeling of insecurity : and those acts of affectionate remembrance, which might be prompted by a deep regret for the loss of a loved companion, might appear to others the effect of remorse and penitence.

But whether Ethelred was, or was not, implicated in the murder of his queen, one part of the tradition already noticed may have some foundation. A church may have been erected at that early period

at Melbourne, in consequence of Queen Osthrid's death. The name of the place affords a remarkable confirmation of this idea. We learn from Bede, that even before this time, it was not unusual to erect religious buildings upon spots where distinguished persons had died by violence, and to provide for the continual residence of the clergy, in order that prayers might be constantly offered up for the soul of the murdered person : and wherever a church was built, the emblem of Christianity was erected near it, and sometimes supplied a distinguishing name to the place where it was found. This seems to have been the case with respect to Melbourne. The most simple and satisfactory derivation of the name is from the Saxon, Mael-burn, which signifies *The brook of the cross*, and would lead naturally to the inference, that the place had been so called, from the circum-

stance of a cross having been set up by the side of the brook which runs near the town.

Proceeding, then, upon the supposition, that the tradition which connects the building of Melbourne Church with the death of Ethelred's queen, is not without foundation, we have at once a good and sufficient reason for the peculiar name which has been given to the place :—Osthrid was waylaid and murdered ; and upon the spot where the crime was perpetrated, the emblem of Christianity was set up, and provision made for the constant performance of the rites of Christian worship. Hence, this spot became distinguished by the name Mael-burn,—one part of the word having reference to its natural situation on the bank of a brook ; and the other, to the peculiar circumstance already noticed, the erection of a cross. In this respect,

the derivation of the name is precisely similar to that of Maldon in Essex, which, in Saxon, is Mael-dun, the hill of the cross.

There are, however, other circumstances which tend to strengthen the opinion, that this is the true derivation of the name. During the autumn of the past year, 1842, the workmen, while cleaning the church, removed the whitewash from one of the pillars, which was found to be covered with figures rudely painted, but in such an imperfect state, that the subject could not be clearly ascertained. They seemed, however, to have reference to some occurrence similar to Queen Osthrid's death, and the subsequent provision made for prayers for her soul. In the centre was represented a crucifix; and in the compartments by which it was surrounded, were various figures, the chief of which was that of a male, holding in one hand a

large club, and, with the other, grasping the wrist of a female, whose head is represented below.



There had been another painting on the same pillar previous to this, of which there could be distinguished only the figure of a knight in armour, as if in the act of striking : it appeared to have been well executed, and probably related to the same subject ; but when it became defaced, it was considered easier to paint the whole afresh, than to repair the old one.

From these circumstances, it may be inferred, that upon the site of the present

church, provision was made at that early period for Christian worship, and especially for the continual offering up of prayers, on account of Queen Osthrid's murder. At first, a cross was erected, together with some small building which might serve to protect the officiating priest from the severity of the weather ; and, at some subsequent period, the church now standing was built upon the same spot. But before we endeavour to ascertain what that period was, it will be necessary to review the history of Mercia, with respect to the introduction of Christianity.

MERCIA.

MERCIA appears to have derived its Saxon inhabitants from the kingdom of Northumberland. Cridda, who was probably a younger branch of the family reigning there,* penetrated into the interior of the country, and having laid the foundation of a kingdom, afterwards one of the most powerful of the Heptarchy, was succeeded by his son Wibba.

Wibba had a son, Penda ; a man whose restless and daring disposition seems to have been considered a sufficient reason for withholding from him that power, which would have naturally descended to him from his father. Upon Wibba's death, he was succeeded by his brother Cearl, although Penda was nearly forty

* He was the tenth in descent from Whethelgeat, the third son of Woden. Ida, the founder of the kingdom of Northumberland, left twelve sons.

years of age. From this, we may conjecture, that Mercia was in a state of dependence, and, in fact, a part of the kingdom of Northumberland: the king of which knowing, and perhaps fearing Penda, was anxious to keep the reins of power out of his hands. Time, however, did not soften down the savage features of his natural character. After about ten years, he succeeded his uncle Cearl, and immediately began an aspiring and sanguinary course, asserted his independence of Northumberland, and claimed for Mercia the rights of an unfettered sovereignty.

The character of Penda is described by the Saxon historians as altogether tyrannical and odious: one from which we might suppose that Christianity had everything to fear, and nothing to hope. Yet it pleased God to choose the period of this man's power for the introduction of Christianity into the kingdom of Mercia: and

although the difference was necessarily great between his own conduct and that taught and inculcated by the preachers of Christianity, yet he did not prove to it that enemy which might reasonably have been expected. It is probable that he had no belief in the value of any system of religion whatever : he had been brought up in Paganism, and continued to observe its rites, because they were agreeable to his natural disposition ; but he had sufficient observation to perceive that the duties enforced by Christian teachers were calculated to make his people better subjects ; and therefore, professing Christians, whose conduct was an exemplification of the holiness of their faith, were permitted peaceably to enjoy their opinions ; but when they did not show in their lives the effect of that purifying faith which they professed, they were treated by Penda with the greatest severity and scorn.

Peada, the eldest son of Penda, seems to have been a man of a mild and peaceable disposition, entirely different from his father. This young prince having become enamoured of Alhfleda, the daughter of Oswy, king of Northumberland, sought her for his wife. His religion, however, was an obstacle in his way. Oswy, himself a Christian, had determined that none but a Christian should espouse his daughter; and therefore required Peada to make an immediate profession of Christianity, and to pledge himself to introduce it into Mercia whenever he should succeed to the government. Peada would not carelessly agree to these conditions, but examined closely the claims of the new religion; and being convinced of its truth, immediately embraced it; and, shortly after his baptism, obtained the hand of Alhfleda, and returned into Mercia accompanied by

four priests, who began immediately to spread abroad the doctrines of the Gospel, probably in the neighbourhood of Repton, where Peada resided.

The death of Penda now taking place, strengthened the hopes which had been entertained of a permanent establishment of Christianity in this powerful kingdom. Oswy had defeated and slain Penda in battle; and in the exercise of his power as conqueror, took the government of Mercia into his own hands, and gave immediate encouragement to Christianity, or rather, according to the practice of those times, he commanded the profession of it, and made provision for the full performance of its ordinances, by establishing a bishopric, to which he elevated Diuma, one of the four priests by whom Peada had been accompanied out of Northumberland.

Human laws, however, have no power

to change the natural inclinations of the heart : the commands of Oswy secured for Christianity an outward show of respect ; but the love of Paganism and of its savage rites was still secretly cherished, and wanted but an opportunity to break out into a flame. That opportunity presented itself sooner perhaps than was expected by those who desired it. When Oswy had overthrown Penda, he exerted himself to the utmost to destroy every one of his family, with the single exception of his own son-in-law Peada ; and it appears that only one other of Penda's children escaped his fury. Oswy assumed the government, made Mercia again a province of North-umberland, and about two years afterwards, when every thing seemed to have settled into a state of tranquillity, he placed all that part of the kingdom which lay south of the Trent under the govern-

ment of Peada. This prince had not exercised his newly acquired authority many months, before he was treacherously murdered, while engaged in the solemn duties of religion ; and his queen Alhfleda, if not herself a participator in the crime, is accused of having encouraged the murderers of her husband.

This event caused the whole government to be thrown into confusion, of which the disaffected Mercian nobles were not slow to take advantage. Wulfhere, the youngest son of Penda, whom they had sedulously concealed from Oswy, they now placed at their head, and succeeded in restoring the whole kingdom to a state of independence.

Wulfhere inherited both the Paganism and the savage spirit of his father ; and consequently his establishment upon the throne of Mercia was unfavourable to the

progress of Christianity, even if the result had been nothing more than the withdrawing from its professors that encouragement which they had previously received: but it appears that he was an open enemy of the religion of the Gospel, and laboured to destroy that faith which afterwards he zealously supported. His natural disposition, and the barbarous character of the times, may be gathered from the account given of the circumstance which led to his conversion.

Wulfhere had two sons, who were one day, while hunting, thrown into the company of St. Chad, and by his exhortations prevailed upon to renounce the errors of Paganism, and to embrace Christianity. This brought upon them the anger of their father, who inhumanly murdered them both, with his own hand, while they were kneeling together at prayer. Conscience

became immediately a torment to him, and he sought in vain to be delivered from its stings. At length he had recourse to St. Chad, and by his advice sought pardon for his crime in an earnest use of the ordinances of the Christian faith. He made open profession of Christianity; and with the zeal of one who felt that but for this his days must have been passed in the deepest wretchedness, laboured anxiously for its establishment. At his death, in A.D. 675, he was succeeded by his nephew Ethelred, the son of Peada, who had been educated in the principles and practice of the Christian religion, and who continued to support and encourage it, till it entirely superseded the rites of Paganism.





N. E. VIEW OF MELBOURNE CHURCH,
IN ITS PRESENT STATE, 1842.

THE FOUNDATION OF MELBOURNE CHURCH.

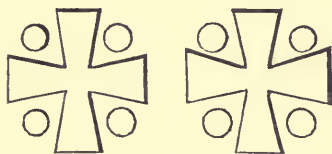
FROM the tradition which has been noticed, together with the name of the place, and the custom already mentioned, then existing, of building churches for the purpose of “causing prayers to be offered up for the soul of a murdered person upon the spot where the murder had been perpetrated,”—it may reasonably be inferred, that a church was founded at Melbourne as early as the very beginning of the eighth century, and probably upon the exact spot where Osthrid met her death. But admitting this to be the case, it must still be a question whether the church then founded was the same which is now in existence; and there are many things, both in the character of the building itself, and in the his-

tory of those unsettled times, which lead to the conclusion that it was not. The style of workmanship is evidently of much later date, and the whole plan and execution of the building point to a period when the art of working in stone had attained an excellence which could not be expected at its first introduction. The original roof was formed of two sides of an equilateral triangle,—an arrangement which was probably not adopted for some time after stone churches began to be erected; the first, built by foreign workmen, being copies of Roman buildings, and, like them, covered with a roof nearly flat: but it was soon found that this, however suitable to the mild climate of Italy, became a serious disadvantage in one more variable and rigorous. This seems to have suggested the more pointed roof, which afterwards became general, and the existence of which leads to the inference

that those buildings upon which it is found could not have been among the first erected in the country.

Again, the outside walls of this church are strengthened with small rectangular buttresses, projecting only a few inches, but running up the whole height of the wall. These were never found in the earliest churches, but were introduced with that style of building which prevailed about the time of Edward the Confessor.

There are also, upon the capital of one of the pillars, two plain crosses, with a pellet in each angle.



If we could ascertain that any king of Mercia had adopted these symbols, we might presume that he was in some way

connected with the building, and consequently there would be some authority for assigning it a specific date ; on this point, however, the coins of that period, by which alone our judgment must be guided, supply but scanty and imperfect information. The symbol of the cross was adopted by the Saxon kings, to declare their profession of Christianity ; hence it is probable that, in the first instance, they would merely use a plain cross ; and afterwards, when it had come into common use, marks of different kinds were added by way of distinction. This opinion is in some degree supported by a reference to the Saxon coins which have been preserved to the present time ; from them it appears that, as far as Mercia is concerned, pellats were first introduced into the cross, the symbol of its kings, when they became tributary to the kings

of the West Saxons : the first coin bearing that distinctive mark, is one of Wiglaf, who began his reign A.D. 825 ; and Berhtulf, who succeeded to the government A.D. 838, continued to use it. These symbols then would lead us to suppose that, if Melbourne Church was built under some king of Mercia, the period of its erection must have been subsequent to the conclusion of the Heptarchy.

The irruption of the Danes, and the disturbed state of the country consequent upon it, is another argument against the opinion entertained by some, that this church was built before the ninth century. In the year 874, these invaders made their way to Repton, at which place they spent the winter, destroying all around them, and especially religious buildings, amongst which was the celebrated priory at Repton, the crypt of which still remains. Now Melbourne

church, being at a distance of only seven miles from Repton, could not have remained unknown to the Danes, and would never, had the present building then existed, have been allowed to escape the destruction with which all others were visited.

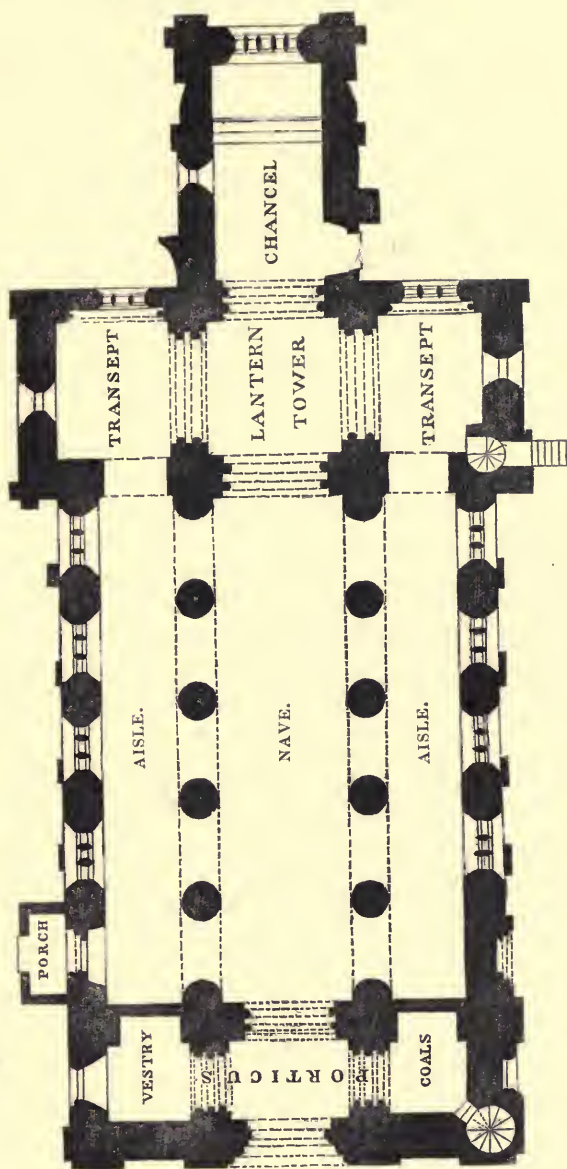
Although, therefore, it is allowed that churches were built of stone long before the time now spoken of, yet the circumstances which have been noticed are strong evidence that the date of the building of Melbourne church must have been after the ninth century, and probably some little time before the Norman conquest. It is indeed the opinion of several antiquarians, that the style of the building points to a period somewhat later than this ; but the date here assigned cannot be far from correct, because we find one part of the fabric undergoing repair in less than two

hundred years from this time. The south arcade is in character entirely different from the rest of the building, and evidently inserted after the whole had been completed ;—probably at the time the church was granted to the bishop of Carlisle, when it appears to have been thoroughly repaired. This event took place A.D. 1269, in which year we learn that “ Henry III granted to God, and the church of the Blessed Mary at Carlisle, and to Walter, then bishop of Carlisle, and his successors, and to the priors and canons of Carlisle in the said church and their successors, the parsonage of Melbourne, with the rights, lands, and appurtenances.”

It has been already mentioned that the first Christian churches were built after the plan of the Basilicæ, and distinguished by the same name. The emperor Constantine is recorded to have given his own

palace on the Cœlian mount for the site of a basilica, to be devoted to the spreading of that faith which he had embraced. He also built the basilica of the Vatican (which was removed by Leo X, to make way for St. Peter's), and that of St. Paul, which still exists, although in a ruinous state. This latter consisted of a nave and two side aisles ; the rectangular body of the church being divided by two rows of twenty columns each ; but in order to support the roof of the side aisles, there were two other rows of twenty smaller columns. It was entered by an open portico ; and directly opposite, in the middle of the transept, was a semicircular apsis.

Melbourne Church, although of much smaller dimensions, is built upon a similar plan. Under a noble arch at the west end, we gain admission to the portico, which is about fifteen feet wide, and extends the



MELBOURNE CHURCH.
PRESENT GROUND PLAN.



whole breadth of the church ; it is covered by a groined arch, over which there have originally been chambers, but it is doubtful to what purpose they were appropriated : and the extremities were surmounted by two small towers ; the spiral staircase leading up to that on the south is still open, but the other has been built up for many years. From the portico there are three entrances into the body of the church, the centre one being nearly equal to the width of the nave ; and immediately adjoining the south side of this arch stands the font, a hemisphere of stone, supported on a cluster of four pillars, through which there is an aperture to carry off the water ; it is lined with beaten lead, and is doubtless of high antiquity. The body of the church is divided into a nave and side aisles by two rows of massive pillars, connected by arches of the horse-shoe form,

and enriched towards the nave by zig-zag mouldings. Above these arches are the arcades, which, however, are different from each other : the northern one is of the same style as the rest of the building ; but with the exception of one small arch, that on the south is of much later date : the style in which it is built, was first introduced about the end of the reign of Stephen, but the workmanship of the pillars, by which each pair of arches is separated, strengthens the opinion that this arcade was not completed till the middle of the thirteenth century, the period at which we have already stated the church was granted to the bishop of Carlisle.

The principal tower is situated over the intersection of the nave and the transept, and contained originally a beautiful lantern, intended to throw light upon the grand altar ; it consisted of three tiers of arches,



J.M. DEL.

C. GRAY. SC.

MELBOURNE CHURCH. THE NAVE, RESTORED.



and was covered by a groined roof. Beyond the transept is the bema, or chancel; this, as we have noticed, was built in a semi-circular form; and on each side of it, but not extending so far to the east, was a similar recess or apsis, by which the side aisles were terminated.

Such, in all its main points, was the original of Melbourne Church,—a work of great beauty, whether considered as a whole, or in the parts of which it was composed. And although some of its beauties are impaired, yet much still remains by which its original character can be ascertained. The interior of the building is nearly perfect, and even the external alterations which have from time to time been made, have left much worthy of admiration. The first alteration in the original plan of the building appears to have been the south arcade already spoken of; and next to

this, probably about the end of the reign of Henry VII, the circular ends of the side aisles seem to have fallen to decay, and the arch which divided the apsis from the transept was filled up with a rough wall, in which windows were inserted, evidently taken from some other building, since they differ from each other, both in style and in the material of which they are made : but from those projecting stones, which were used to support the books at the time of divine service, being found by the side of both, it is clear that they were inserted before the time of the Reformation.

At a still later period, the side walls were raised, and the original sloping roof replaced by a flat one, covered with lead : this alteration allowed the insertion of larger windows than those in the original building. The upper part of the tower appears to have been rebuilt at the same

time ; and, together with the beautiful lantern in it, converted into a belfrey ; the bells having up to that period been hung in one of the small towers at the west end. This change was probably made about the beginning of the seventeenth century : one small bell was cast in 1610, another in 1614, and a third in 1632. The great bell, after having been cracked and useless for many years, was recast in 1732.

By order of her majesty Queen Elizabeth, a survey of the manor was made in the year 1602, by Thomas Fanshaw, then auditor of the Duchy of Lancaster ; and in the background of a sketch appended to that survey, is a representation of the tower of this church, not in its present state, but with the original circular arched windows. The changes, therefore, to which reference has been made, could not have been till after this time ; and the casting of the small

bell gives us a date when the work may be inferred either to have been completed, or at least to have been in progress. The steep roof was left, however, for another century, upon the nave and chancel; the former was covered with lead in 1711, and probably at the same time the circular end of the chancel was destroyed, and rebuilt in a style entirely different from the rest of the building. This change is much to be regretted; if the original chancel, with its circular end, had been restored (which might have been done without much additional expense), one of the characteristic features of our ancient churches would have been preserved, which is now almost forgotten. It is clear that at various times considerable sums have been expended upon this church, but they do not seem to have been directed by any wish to preserve the beauty of the building, although

that beauty could in no way interfere with its internal arrangements.

Melbourne Church, although in so good a state of preservation, is comparatively but little known ; and probably, from its situation, it has escaped the notice of early historians. A church was in existence at Melbourne at the time of the Conquest, for we read, “ *ibi presbyter et ecclesia*,”—“ there there is a priest and a church ;” and this church was very probably the one now standing. After this, it is only mentioned as having been granted by different sovereigns to various ecclesiastics,—one of whom, Simon de Melburn, Clerk, founded a chantry dedicated to St. Katherine within the church. The place where this chantry priest officiated, appears to have been in the semicircular recess which terminated the south aisle of the church. Subsequently, there was another chantry founded

by the heirs of Leigh Hunt, the priest officiating in the north apsis. Both of these priests had residences provided for them, and one was richly endowed. Melbourne was indeed at one time a place of considerable importance, and possessed a castle to which Henry V is said to have retired occasionally, to enjoy the pastime of hunting. This castle is supposed to have been built by Henry, Earl of Lancaster and Derby, son of Earl Edmund, in the year 1328. The character of the building, as it appears in the sketch made in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and which has been already alluded to, agrees with the style of building prevalent at that period; and indeed there seems no reason for supposing it to have been erected earlier. It appears to have been a place of considerable strength, and doubtless bore its part in the various struggles of the times. Within its

walls, John, Duke of Bourbon, who was taken prisoner at the battle of Agincourt, was confined by order of Henry V, and kept there nineteen years, in custody of Nicholas Montgomery the younger. His treatment, according to tradition, was very severe; he was kept in the dungeons of the castle, and barely supplied with sufficient food to preserve him in existence.

Some years ago, these subterranean apartments were opened and partially examined; they were found to be of considerable extent, and of superior workmanship; but no discovery was made of any importance, nor from which any information could be gleaned with regard to the castle, except only as to the time of its complete destruction. This event probably took place about the period of the Great Rebellion; for on the stairs leading down to these subterranean apartments, there were

found coins bearing a date immediately prior to that event.* The destruction of this castle is assigned by tradition to the troops of Cromwell ; but it is scarcely to be supposed that a place in such a dilapidated state as this must have been at that period, could have offered any reason for a visit from Cromwell himself. This destruction, however, may have been the work

* An opinion is very prevalent that there is a subterranean passage from the castle to the church ; and it has even been reported that this passage has been broken into in different places. But when these accounts have been traced to their source, it appears that there is no ground whatever for such a supposition. The one extremity which was said to have been opened, was the subterranean apartment of the castle. The other was a small entrance door into the cellar of the chantry house, the use of which has never been explained, but it certainly had no connexion with any passage, a yard from its entrance. And the place where it was supposed to have been broken into between these extreme points, proves to have been no passage at all, but simply an oblong kind of trough, with a sink-hole at one end, from which it would seem that it was intended to contain water—perhaps it was a bath.

of some of his followers : Sir John Gell, at Derby, raised a regiment of foot, and was very active in behalf of the Parliament ; and as there were influential royalist families both at Melbourne and King's Newton, it is not unlikely that some steps may have been taken by them to put the old castle in a state of defence, which may have brought down upon it the anger of some of these vigilant servants of the Parliament. It is true that it was at this period private property ; for in the year 1604 it was conveyed by James I, by grant under the seal of the Duchy of Lancaster, to Charles, Earl of Nottingham, who sold it soon afterwards to Henry, Earl of Huntingdon, by whom it was suffered to fall to decay. It is not, therefore, to be supposed that Melbourne Castle underwent a regular siege, though its ruin may have been hastened by some indiscretion

of the royalists, bringing against it the local forces of the opposite party.

From the time of its erection until it was conveyed away from the Duchy of Lancaster by king James, we meet but seldom with any account of persons connected with it. Some few are named as having been governors of the Castle, but little more is said respecting them. At the south extremity of the transept of the church, in that part which was used as the chantry of St. Katherine, lies the figure of a warrior in complete armour, who has been supposed to have been connected with the castle. This, however, is uncertain : from the arms which are carved upon his shield, it is conjectured that he was of the Hardinge family, of which that part of the church is the private burial-place.

The Hardinges seem to have been from a very early period resident at the hamlet

of King's Newton, in the parish of Melbourne. Originally they were from Denmark, and a branch of the royal family of that kingdom. The first who was resident in England was Robert, the son of Hardinge, an alderman of Bristol, who appears to have been a personal friend of Henry II, and by his favour a marriage was made between Maurice, Robert's son, and the daughter of the Lord de Berkley, from which marriage the barons of Berkley are descended.

It is sometimes imagined, but perhaps without sufficient grounds, that the position of the sword in ancient sepulchral monuments was intended to record the nature of the death of the person represented. Thus, if a sword was found naked, and laid upon the body with the point upwards, the party to which the deceased was attached had been victorious in the battle in

which he lost his life ; but if his party had been defeated, the sword was sheathed, and placed by his side.

Assuming this idea not to be without foundation, it would lead us to infer that the knight to whose memory this monument was raised, died in battle on the losing side. This, however, does not assist us to determine who he was, as there is no mention in history of any of the family of the Hardinges, to which we presume this knight belonged, dying in battle about that period, except only Maurice, Lord de Berkley, who fell at the battle of Bannockburn, and whose corpse, if brought into England, would most probably have been carried forward to the chief seat of the family, near Bristol.

After the time of Charles I, the destruction of the Castle was complete : the materials were removed and applied to other

purposes, until at length all that remains of this once extensive building is a few yards of what appears to have been its outer wall, and from which no idea can be formed respecting it.

Next to the mailed warrior already mentioned, the most curious monument in the church is that of Sir Robert Hardinge, a distinguished royalist in the time of the Commonwealth. He had the honour to entertain at King's Newton Hall his unfortunate sovereign Charles II, and probably during the time of his troubles, for he left some lines written upon a pane of glass in the room which he occupied. It was signed *Cras ero lux*,—"to-morrow I shall shine,"—clearly pointing to a hope of better times, and these words, when transposed, form *Carolus Rex*. This pane of glass was sedulously preserved for a long time; but unfortunately, some years ago, it was either

accidentally destroyed, or surreptitiously removed.

At this time, Sir John Coke, the maternal ancestor of Lord Viscount Melbourne, was lessee of the rectory under the bishop of Carlisle, and resided in the rectory-house, on the site of which Melbourne Hall now stands. The hall was built by his grandson, Sir Thomas Coke, chamberlain to Queen Anne,—the rectory-house and rectorial tithes having been conveyed to him in fee-farm, by an agreement (confirmed by Act of Parliament in 1704) between the then bishop of Carlisle and himself. At the same time he caused a considerable quantity of ground adjoining the Hall to be laid out and planted as a garden, which now, from its peculiar style and the care bestowed upon it, is scarcely to be surpassed for beauty by anything of the kind in the kingdom.

The natural features of the situation,—the antiquity of the church,—and the beauty of the gardens, which the kindness of Lord Melbourne opens to the passing stranger,—render a visit to this place well worth the attention of the antiquary and tourist.

FINIS.

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